

“We raise sheep.” That’s a good one, isn’t it? Jodi put it on our service folder. I think we should put it on our sign, on our letterhead, on our website and Facebook pages - “We raise sheep.”

Why? Sheep are great. I asked our teachers to ask our children about sheep. We got some great answers. “Sheep are fuzzy and fluffy. They’re cute. They can be funny. They like to shed their fur so they can share it with the other sheep who don’t have much fur and they are friends and they live together.” So, who wouldn’t like a sheep? Who wouldn’t want to be a sheep? “We raise sheep.”

When I say that - “We raise sheep” - I sense some of us might not like that tagline “We raise sheep” as much as I do. Why? It could be some of the other things our children say about sheep - “They’re not the smartest animals in the world. They’re funny looking. They can be really smelly.”

It gets worse. “Sheep easily wander away.”

The thought of being a sheep doesn’t sound so good, does it? For some people, the thought of being considered a sheep, called a sheep, could be offensive. How so?

For some, “We raise sheep” means “We raise followers.” We don’t always like the idea of being thought of as a follower, do we? We’d rather be a leader or independent, someone who can think for themselves. We want to raise our children to be leaders or, at least, able to think for themselves, not just as followers.

Why? History. Personal history - we can think of all sorts of times we followed the wrong people and got into trouble, not so? Personal history, Bible history, world history, and everything in between shows us what happens when people listen to the wrong voices and follow the wrong people. When we listen to the wrong voices and follow the wrong people, we get in trouble! And what does personal history and Bible history, world history and everything in between show us? People tend to listen to a lot of the wrong voices and follow the wrong people a lot. So we want to be strong to think for ourselves; we want to raise our children to be strong to think for themselves. But what? History. (Don’t you hate history?) When Eve and Adam thought for themselves and ate the fruit God said not to eat ... when Eve and Adam ate from that fruit, they weren’t thinking for themselves, were they? They were following, following Satan. So much of what our world likes to think of as “thinking for our self” isn’t “thinking for our

self,” but is following - following Satan’s lead, or following someone else in sin, or following the sin pre-programmed into our self.

To think we can live life without being a follower, to think we can raise our children to be something other than followers is - unreal. It doesn’t matter how much a leader we are, how strong we are to think for ourselves, if we’re not a follower of Jesus, we will be following Satan and most of the world into hell. So, yes, we want to raise our children to be leaders, to be strong, to be able to think. How? To be able to think and lead as followers, as the followers and sheep of Jesus. Why? I’ll get there in a moment. But first ...

Some people might not like “We raise sheep” because they think of sheep as weak. And we want better for ourselves; we want better for our children than to be weak, harassed and helpless. Why? Love and fear. We love ourselves and we love our children. And fear - we don’t want to be victims of the law of the jungle - eat or be eaten. We don’t want to raise our children to be weak, helpless, hopeless, victims.

Let me just say this - it doesn’t matter how strong we make ourselves. It doesn’t matter how strong we raise our children to be. No matter how strong we make ourselves or our children, in this world there will always a stronger force of evil. If we aren’t sheep in the flock and fold of Jesus, then we out there and on our own as prey for those stronger forces of evil. If we aren’t raising our children to be safe in the flock and fold of Jesus, we are raising them to be prey for those forces of evil. We’re either sheep with Jesus keeping us safe for heaven, or we’re prey without Jesus keeping us safe for heaven.

But it’s not just the forces of evil that should have us concerned, is it? If we aren’t sheep with Jesus keeping us for heaven, then we’re outside of Jesus’ flock and fold, outside of his promise and under his judgment. It’s not just the world I need to be afraid of. There is a day of judgment coming for all who think they are too good to be sheep with Jesus. That judgment will be hell without Jesus.

That’s why we raise our children to be sheep, to be sheep in the flock and fold of our Good Shepherd Jesus. When we follow Jesus, we’re not following someone who is just looking out for himself at our expense. We’re not following a fake, a fraud, a wannabe making himself feel good. And with Jesus, we’re not following someone who is just a leader, a teacher, leading and teaching a new way of living. No, in Jesus, we have God’s Good Shepherd to provide for us and protect us, to save us and deliver us, to gather us and get us to life the way it’s supposed to be.

How? Our Good Shepherd did the unthinkable - he gave his life for his sheep, his life for our lives, for you, for me, for our children. How so? The Shepherd became a sheep, a lamb, the Lamb of God. As Shepherd and as Lamb, he listened and he followed God perfectly - all the way to the cross. As Shepherd and as Lamb, he didn't live weak and quit on what God gave him to do; he didn't live weak and fall prey or give in to the world around him. As Shepherd and as Lamb, Jesus lived strong and laid down his life for you and for me. As the Lamb of God, he took our sins as his own. He took ownership of the times we wandered off; he took our sheepishness; he took our wolfishness; he took our pride too proud to be sheep. He took our sin and laid down his life - his life for our lives - so we can have life the way it's supposed to be in heaven.

But our stained glass window isn't a memorial to a dead shepherd, is it? Jesus raised himself back to life and today he lives as our Good Shepherd. Today he lives as Good Shepherd to make sure that you and me and the rest of his sheep and lambs are taken care of. Today he lives as Good Shepherd to make sure that you and me and the rest of his sheep and lambs are kept safe for heaven. Today he lives as Good Shepherd so that - in a world of wolves and danger - we can live boldly and confidently -

**“The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not be in want. ...
Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,
I will fear no evil, for you are with me;
your rod and your staff, they comfort me. ...
Surely goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life,
and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.”**

That's right, as sheep we don't have to be sheepish. When David went up against Goliath, he wasn't being sheepish, but he was stepping up as someone raised to be a sheep, a sheep in the flock of our Lord. That's why ... Jesus is why! - We Raise Sheep!
Amen.

NEW MORNING PRAISE

IN OUR WORLD TODAY ... we aspire to be special and important; we might hope that our children become even more special and important.

IN OUR WORSHIP TODAY ... we see what makes us truly special and important, and how to raise our children as special and important. How? "We raise sheep!"

HYMN

"Speak, O Lord"

Hymn 633

OPENING SENTENCES



O Lord, o-pen my lips.



And my mouth shall de-clare your praise.



Hasten to save me, O God.



O Lord, come quickly to help me.

CONFESSION & ABSOLUTION OF SINS

M We have come into the presence of God, who created us to love and serve him as his dear children. But we have disobeyed him and deserve only his wrath and punishment. Therefore, let us confess our sins to him and plead for his mercy.

C Merciful Father in heaven, I am altogether sinful from birth. In countless ways I have sinned against you and do not deserve to be called your child. But trusting in Jesus, my Savior, I pray: Have mercy on me according to your unfailing love. Cleanse me from my sin, and take away my guilt.

M God, our heavenly Father, has forgiven all your sins. By the perfect life and innocent death of our Lord Jesus Christ, he has removed your guilt forever. You are his own dear child. May God give you strength to live according to his will.

C Amen.



Give glory to God, our light and our life.



Come, O come, let us wor - ship.

COME, O COME, LET US SING TO THE LORD



Come, O come, let us sing to the Lord,



let us shout with joy to our sav - ing Rock;



come, en - ter in with our songs of praise,



come, en - ter in with thanks - giv - ing.



1 You are a great and a won - drous God,
2 Come, let us wor - ship and, bow - ing low,



cup - ping in your hands all the depths of earth.
 kneel be - fore the One who has made us all.

You made the hills and the moun - tains high,
 You are the God whom we call our own, *Refrain*

you made the seas and the dry land.
 we are the flock that you shep - herd.

PRAYER OF THE DAY (LUTHER'S MORNING PRAYER)

I thank you, my heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ, your dear Son, that you have kept me this night from all harm and danger. Keep me this day also from sin and every evil, that all my doings and life may please you. Into your hands I commend my body and soul and all things. Let your holy angel be with me, that the wicked foe may have no power over me. **Amen.**

Children Sing

"Feed My Lambs"

A MEDLEY OF SCHOOL THEME VERSES

M Do not be anxious about anything,
 C **but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving,**
present your requests to God. (Philippians 4:6 ~ 2025-2026)

M I have told you these things,
 C **so that in me you may have peace.**

M In this world you will have trouble.
 C **But take heart! I have overcome the world.** (John 16:33 ~ 2017-2018)

M So do not fear, for I am with you;
 C **do not be dismayed, for I am your God.**

M I will strengthen you and help you; (Isaiah 41:10 ~ 2018-2019)

C **I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.**

M "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened,

C **and I will give you rest."** (Matthew 11:28 ~ 2019-2020)

M "I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord,

C **"plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future."** (Jeremiah 29:11~ 2020-2021)

M Be kind and compassionate to one another,

C **forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.**

M Those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength.

C **They will soar on wings like eagles;** (Ephesians 4:32 ~ 2024-2025)

M they will run and not grow weary,

C **they will walk and not be faint.** (Isaiah 40:31~ 2021-2022)

M Therefore go and gather disciples from all nations

C **by baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.** (Matthew 28:19 ~ 2022-2023)

M I can do all things

C **through Christ who strengthens me.** (Philippians 4:13~ 2023-2024)

SCHOOL CHILDREN SING (SUNDAY)

"In Christ Alone"

Hymn 510

School Children Sing vs. 1 & 4

Congregation Sings vs. 2 & 3

FIRST READING

1 Samuel 17 (Select)

Now the Philistines gathered their forces for war. The Philistines occupied one hill and the Israelites another, with the valley between them.

A champion named Goliath, who was from Gath, came out of the Philistine camp. His height was six cubits and a span. He had a bronze helmet on his head and wore a coat of scale armor of bronze weighing five thousand shekels; on his legs he wore bronze greaves, and a bronze javelin was slung on his back. His spear shaft was like a weaver's rod, and its iron point weighed six hundred shekels. His shield bearer went ahead of him.

Goliath stood and shouted to the ranks of Israel, "Why do you come out and line up for battle? Am I not a Philistine, and are you not the servants of Saul? Choose a man and have him come down to me. If he is able to fight and kill me, we will become your subjects; but if I overcome him and kill him, you will become our subjects and serve us." Then the Philistine said, "This day I defy the armies of Israel! Give me a man and let us fight each other." On hearing the Philistine's words, Saul and all the Israelites were dismayed and terrified.

For forty days the Philistine came forward every morning and evening and took his stand.

Whenever the Israelites saw the man, they all fled from him in great fear.

David said to Saul, "Let no one lose heart on account of this Philistine; your servant will go and fight him."

Saul replied, "You are not able to go out against this Philistine and fight him; you are only a young man, and he has been a warrior from his youth."

But David said to Saul, "Your servant has been keeping his father's sheep. When a lion or a bear came and carried off a sheep from the flock, I went after it, struck it and rescued the sheep from its mouth. When it turned on me, I seized it by its hair, struck it and killed it. Your servant has killed both the lion and the bear; this uncircumcised Philistine will be like one of them, because he has defied the armies of the living God. The LORD who rescued me from the paw of the lion and the paw of the bear will rescue me from the hand of this Philistine."

Saul said to David, "Go, and the LORD be with you."

Then Saul dressed David in his own tunic. He put a coat of armor on him and a bronze helmet on his head. David fastened on his sword over the tunic and tried walking around, because he was not used to them.

"I cannot go in these," he said to Saul, "because I am not used to them." So he took them off. Then he took his staff in his hand, chose five smooth stones from the stream, put them in the pouch of his shepherd's bag and, with his sling in his hand, approached the Philistine.

Meanwhile, the Philistine, with his shield bearer in front of him, kept coming closer to David. He looked David over and saw that he was little more than a boy, glowing with health and handsome, and he despised him. He said to David, "Am I a dog, that you come at me with sticks?" And the Philistine cursed David by his gods. "Come here," he said, "and I'll give your flesh to the birds and the wild animals!"

David said to the Philistine, "You come against me with sword and spear and javelin, but I come against you in the name of the LORD Almighty, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. This day the LORD will deliver you into my hands, and I'll strike you down and cut off your head. All those gathered here will know that it is not by sword or spear that the LORD saves; for the battle is the LORD's, and he will give all of you into our hands."

As the Philistine moved closer to attack him, David ran quickly toward the battle line to meet him. Reaching into his bag and taking out a stone, he slung it and struck the Philistine on the forehead. The stone sank into his forehead, and he fell face down on the ground.

So David triumphed over the Philistine with a sling and a stone; without a sword in his hand he struck down the Philistine and killed him.

The Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

PSALM OF THE DAY

Psalm 23

The LORD is my shepherd, I lack nothing.

He makes me lie down in green pastures,
he leads me beside quiet waters,
he refreshes my soul.

He guides me along the right paths
for his name's sake.

Even though I walk
through the darkest valley,
I will fear no evil,
for you are with me;
your rod and your staff,
they comfort me.

You prepare a table before me
in the presence of my enemies.

You anoint my head with oil;
my cup overflows.

Surely your goodness and love will follow me
all the days of my life,
and I will dwell in the house of the LORD
forever.

GOSPEL

John 10:27-30

“My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one will snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand. I and the Father are one.”

The Gospel of the Lord.

Praise be to you, O Christ!

APOSTLES' CREED

**I believe in God, the Father Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth.**

**I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried.**

He descended into hell.

The third day he rose again from the dead.

He ascended into heaven

and is seated at the right hand of God the Father Almighty.

From there he will come to judge the living and the dead.

**I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy Christian Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.**

HYMN

"My Worth Is Not in What I Own"

Hymn 753

SERMON

John 10:27-30

HYMN

"I am Jesus Little Lamb"

Hymn 804

OFFERING

If you prefer to give online, the code at the right will take you to our Online Giving page. We invite our online givers to join in our offering with an "I Give Online" card in the pew racks.



(For over 50 years we have been providing families and children with a Christ-centered education. You can help support the ministry of St. John School with a special gift for our Tuition Grant Fund.)

PRAYER OF THE CHURCH

Eternal Father, your Word is a lamp for our feet and a light to our path. You inspired the Scriptures for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness, so that your servants might be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

Lead us to love your Word more and more and to receive your message with great eagerness.

You have given us your Word that we may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing we may have life in his name. Enable us to see the wonders of your love in Christ from the beginning to the end of your holy book.

Help us to see Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith.

Work in all your people, especially in parents, the resolve and patience to teach their children the simple truths about the Savior who loves them. Walk with us as we take our children to the manger, the cross, and the empty tomb. Let them find Jesus in stories, songs, and prayers.

Move us to bring up our children in the training and instruction of the Lord.

Provide wisdom and commitment to teachers who train our young people in Sunday Schools and youth Bible classes. Deepen their knowledge of your Word as they prepare and share the lessons they teach. Move them to model a sincere devotion to the Scriptures.

Lead us to plan for and support the Christian training of children.

We thank you for enabling our congregation to provide elementary (and secondary) education for our children. We know our schools are your special blessing, and we pray for the resolve to establish and maintain standards of excellence in all aspects of education. Move us to be generous in our offerings so that teachers may teach and students may learn in fitting surroundings.

Lead us to provide Christian schools that reflect the immensity of your love.

Work in us that we may find the lasting value of growing in the grace and knowledge of Christ. Lead us to be faithful in our personal study of the Scriptures and in participating in regular Bible classes. Rid us of all thoughts that Christian education ends in our youth. Make us life-long students of your precious Word.

Lead us to believe that at every age your Word remains a lamp for our feet and a light to our path. Amen.

LORD'S PRAYER

**Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name,
thy kingdom come,
thy will be done
on earth as it is in heaven.**

**Give us this day our daily bread;
and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those
who trespass against us;
and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.**

**For thine is the kingdom
and the power and the glory
forever and ever. Amen.**

M O Lord, our heavenly Father, almighty and everlasting God, you have brought us safely to this new day. Defend us with your mighty power, and grant that this day we neither fall into sin nor run into any kind of danger; and in all we do, direct us to what is right in your sight, through Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord. **Amen.**

BLESSING



The Lord bless and keep you.



A - men.



The Lord's face ev - er shine up - on you.



A - men.



The Lord grant you peace for all your days.



A - men.

CLOSING HYMN

"Gracious Savior, Gentle Shepherd"

Hymn 757 vs. 1, 3-4

Special Thanks: *We thank our school children for beautifying our Sunday Service.*

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